

GUIDING PRINCIPLES DETENTION ALTERNATIVES

1. Detention should be viewed as a legal status – with varying levels of supervision – and not as a building.
2. For alternatives to secure detention to be effective, agreement is needed on the purpose of secure detention: To ensure the youth’s appearance at subsequent court hearings, and/or to minimize the likelihood of serious new offenses.
3. For alternatives to secure detention to be effective, agreement is needed on the purpose of non-secure alternatives: To provide a continuum of supervised alternatives for those youth who would otherwise have been securely detained.
4. Detention alternatives should be planned, implemented, managed and monitored using accurate data.
5. A reformed detention system should include a continuum of alternatives to secure detention, with various programs and degrees of supervision matched to the risk of securely detained youth.
6. Alternatives to secure detention should be culturally competent, relevant, and accessible to the youth they serve.
7. Alternatives to detention should be designed and operated on the principle of the least restrictive alternative possible.
8. Alternatives to secure detention should reduce detention, and avoid widening the net by not placing a) youth in alternatives as a diversionary tool or for “treatment” purposes; b) less serious offenders in alternatives because screening criteria are too loose; and c) youth into secure custody because of minor transgressions in an appropriate alternative detention program.

Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation Pathways Monograph # 4: “Consider the Alternatives: Planning and Implementing Detention Alternatives”, Chapter 2.